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## Asthma

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**Description:** Asthma is an inflammatory lung disease and is the most common chronic illness in children. During an asthma attack, the airways in the lungs become swollen and cause coughing. Most people with asthma can lead normal lives when their asthma is well managed. The exact causes of asthma are unknown. However, asthma symptoms can be made worse by respiratory infections, emotions, food allergies and environmental risk factors such as:

- Molds
- Pollen
- Pets (furry, hairy)
- Pests (cockroaches)
- Strong smells

**Symptoms:** The early signs of asthma include coughing, watery eyes, headache, stomachache, itchy or scratchy throat, feeling of tightness in the chest, sneezing or runny nose, feeling dizzy or tired. Wheezing is a common symptom but may not be heard without a stethoscope.

**Treatment:** Children with asthma may be prescribed control medications and/or rescue medications.

Control medications are given daily to help prevent asthma episodes by making airways less sensitive to triggers and to control swelling and inflammation inside the airways. Rescue medications are given when symptoms are present. Rescue medications work quickly and are given to relieve symptoms during an asthma episode and to open airways by relaxing muscles that are tight. Both types of medications may be given by a nebulizer or a metered-dose inhaler with a spacer.

### **Responsibilities of Parents and Caregivers:**

- The child care provider should be provided with, and keep on file, an asthma action plan for each child with asthma. An asthma action plan lists emergency information, asthma triggers, current medications being taken, medications to be administered by the child care provider and steps to be followed if the child has an asthma attack. Additional support from the child's health care providers should be available to the child care provider as needed.
- Find out what starts the child's asthma symptoms. Avoid those things in the child care center.

**Comments:** Free asthma training is available for child care providers. Call the Healthy Child Care Ohio Program at the Ohio Department of Health (614-644-8389).